From the Author

AN

ESSAY

ON

SUNDAY SCHOOLS, &c.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

A

AN ESSAY

ON THE

DEPRAVITY OF THE NATION,

WITH A VIEW TO THE

PROMOTION OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS, &c.

OF WHICH

A MORE EXTENDED PLAN

IS PROPOSED.

By the Rev. JOSEPH BERINGTON.

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AN

ESSAY, &c.

IN viewing the decline and fall of States, in ancient, or in modern, times, it is to the corruption of manners in the people, that the politician, as well as the moraliſt, has principally aſcribed the melancholy event. And as that cauſe is in itſelf ſufficient, why were others to be looked for? The ſteps by which nations, from the moſt contemptible beginnings, roſe to greatneſs and renown, were ſeverity of diſcipline, and the rigid practice of private and public virtue. Let theſe agents ceaſe, and the effect muſt ceaſe with them. Proſperity will be followed by misfortunes, and glory by diſgrace. The annals of every fallen nation atteſt the truth of the obſervation. But examples are unneceſſary to prove it: in the very nature of things it muſt be ſo.

BIBL CANT ACAD

The dependence between thoſe parts of man, which are called ſoul and body, is ſo reciprocal, that their reſpective affections are mutually communicated and mutually felt. In a ſtate of bodily enervation the mind is enervated, and a general languor ſeizes the whole man. See him when his nerves are braced, and his pulſe beats high; he is become active, bold and enterpriſing. Every vice tends to debilitate the individual, whom it has ſubdued; becauſe every vicious indulgence is attended by ſome exceſs, and all exceſs weakens. The vicious man then is a being without energy; at leaſt, he will ſoon become ſuch. The effect I ſpeak of, is natural. The tougheſt bow when too much bent will break. Providence, in great goodneſs, has ſo conſtructed the human frame, that what can injure the moral character ſhall not be committed, even with preſent impunity. The libertine, reclined on his couch, preaches morality by his languid countenance, and is compelled to own, that he has violated the ſacred order of things.

The paſſions (if the human affections ever acquire that name till exceſs has vitiated their character) while properly tempered by reaſon, are the ſource of every great and manly exertion. Looſened from that controul, no torrent is more impetuous or deſtructive. They diſorder, by their violence, the nervous ſyſtem in all its branches; they break aſunder

aſunder every regular aſſociation of ideas; and with this confuſion they introduce anarchy in its worſt form. A man, under the influence of many, or of a ſingle paſſion, if he be not in himſelf miſerable, will be dangerous at leaſt to his fellow-citizens: and that ſame impulſe which, for a time, may ſeem to be the ſpring of health and happineſs, if long indulged, will finally break down his frame, and reduce him to a maſs of ruins. Nothing ſo gentle as the vernal breeze, which animates and gives ſtrength to the powers of nature; but when noxious vapours or contrary blaſts have diſturbed its even current, it riſes to a ſtorm, and devaſtation and ravage mark its courſe.

Such, in a general view, are on the individual the obvious and phyſical effects of vicious indulgence and lawleſs paſſion. There are other effects. Private virtue there can be none, where the character is totally vitiated; and where the evil is but partial, ſometimes ſo deſtructive are its qualities, that it deranges the ſyſtem, and generates an inaptitude to all that is good and honourable. I ſpeak, it is obvious, of habitual derangements and fixed characters. But where the commiſſion of vice is incidental and uncontinued, its operations are proportionably deſtructive. Virtue can only reſult from order and a conſiſtent tenour of thought and action. This order and this conſiſtency are broken

in upon whenever diſcordant ſenſations are excited: and as theſe are repeated or prolonged, new aſſociations are formed of a character abhorrent from the former, and the general ſyſtem of affections ceaſes to be equipoiſed. The ſmalleſt element of infection taken into the vital ſtream, makes its way imperceptibly; it vitiates as it goes, and finally ſeizes on the eſſential ſources of life.

I would not be underſtood to ſay, that there can be no virtue where there are vicious practices, becauſe I know, the ſtream may be ſometimes troubled, while the fountain, from which it flows, remains clear and tranquil. Every bad action does not reach the heart. But in ſome degree or other, at every deviation from moral rectitude, the effects, I have deſcribed, are ſure to take place. The laws which regulate the operations of man are as certainly determined, though under them he is free, as thoſe by which are governed the common ſyſtems of matter.

If man, individually taken, be ſo deranged by vice, as to become a being in which nor harmony of parts, nor order of ideas, nor conſiſtency of character can reſide; what judgment may we form of a ſociety, all the members of which, or by far the major part, are unfortunately ſo conſtituted? It will be an aggregate, held together by no internal

ternal tie, while a principle of deſtruction, fermenting within, threatens at every moment its deſtruction. The evils which we ſaw in the individual now apply to the community; for the community can poſſeſs nothing but what its component parts contributed. Finding no ſecurity within, we muſt look to ſome external cauſe, the influence of which may ſerve as a bond of union.

Intereſt then, which muſt ever ſway the human breaſt, or force, applied through the medium of laws or other coercive means, may perhaps ſupply every advantage, which private virtue, in its moſt exalted forms, could have given. There is an illuſion in this ſuppoſition, which often not reaſon, but the melancholy truth of facts, has alone been able to diſſipate. I know that a ſociety can ſubſiſt, as long as it is the intereſt of its members that it ſhould proſper; that is, as long as ſuch intereſt is felt and is paramount to every other. But when the general good happens to claſh with the ſelfiſh principle, or to be contrary to it, which think you, will preponderate, in the abſence of virtue to turn the ſcale? Private intereſt is too powerful an agent, and dwells too near to the individual, to be ſacrificed to any conſideration, however great or alluring, which is not coincident with itſelf. I am indigent, and the property of my neighbour falls under my hand: ſhall the reflection, that the good

of the community forbids the act, withhold its graſp?

Senſible that no principle, however ſelfiſh, was ſtrong enough to coerce the arm of vice, and to preſerve ſociety from ruin, the founders of States had recourſe to laws. Theſe, they well ſaw, by the penalties they would inflict on the refractory, would at leaſt, and for a time, ſtem the torrent, though its thouſand ſtreams would ever flow, and baffle all oppoſition. But the very act of legiſlation announces, how deſperate the evil is, which calls for a remedy ſo adverſe to the deareſt principles of our being. Laws abridge our liberty: but this we can devote, that life and property may be guarded. Yet are theſe laws themſelves but an imperfect barrier. They can reach, indeed, the more flagrant criminal; while the needy pilferer and the dark aſſaſſin, the perjured villain and the venal ſtateſman, in ſecurity work their way, unawed by juſtice, and triumph in their guilt.

But we have heared of public virtue; of patriots, whom private benevolence never moved, and of ſtateſmen only honeſt in their country's cauſe. Theſe men, it is ſaid, would bring a remedy to every evil; they would give ſtability, by their counſels, to the general weal; and oppoſing, by timely interference, the machinations of domeſtic enemies, and the attacks of public foes, would take

care

care that the republic received no injury. Till the Palladium, ſay they, by the crafty Ulyſſes, was ſtolen from the walls of Troy, the city, though by the Gods devoted to deſtruction, proudly withſtood the efforts of its numerous aſſailants. The men, I allude to, are the palladium of the State, which they are ſent to govern.

In this argument there is alſo much illuſion.—— I believe ſuch virtue may exiſt, (though, in truth, it merits not the name) as long as it continues the intereſt of ſuch men to wear the gaudy ſemblance, or the ruling paſſion can thereby be more efficaciouſly ſerved. Other tie there can be none. Change the order of things. Withdraw the ſtateſman from the helm of buſineſs, and take the truncheon from the general's hand. You have, at once, diſſipated their patriotiſm, and ſilenced all ſolicitude for the ſtate. It will be well, if you have not rendered them its moſt determined foes. In fact, what is all public virtue, if it be real, but the internal principle of rectitude, moving in a larger ſphere, than when it fed the hungry at the gate, and guarded from oppreſſion the widow and the orphan? It is then evident, that from this quarter can be drawn but a temporary and uncertain ſupport. Troy fell, you ſay, when the ſtatue of Minerva was purloined. How ſoon alſo may not the boaſted protection of theſe guardians ceaſe to operate? Too eaſy is the

the tranſition from apparent virtue to real vice; and they have proved the greateſt tyrants, who once affected to be called their country's friends.

In ſpite then of the operation of laws, for all nations have had them; in ſpite of heroes, patriots, and ſtateſmen; and in ſpite of every ſubſtitute, to which human policy has recurred, to ſupply the place of real virtue; ſocieties have been diſſolved, and kingdoms have fallen. The fact evinces that the means were hollow and inefficacious. But is the event aſcribable to no other cauſe? Clearly it is not. In tracing the riſe of nations, we ſee by what ſteps they mounted. They are marked in the ſtern virtue of the leaders, and in the prompt, but manly, ſubmiſſion of the multitude. While this endured, the land ſmiled in ſtrength and happineſs. But when power had introduced wealth, and wealth luxury, and luxury exceſs of every kind, then begins the decline. In proportion to their virtue has been the proſperity of States, and misfortunes have regularly purſued the ſpread of vicious depravity. View the Roman republic emerging from obſcurity, and growing into manhood. The ſame will be the ſurvey of ancient Greece. This virtue could effect. And in the fall of the Weſtern and Eaſtern empires may be traced the baneful hand of vice. The incurſions of foreign invaders aided, I know, the ravages of this internal monſter. But what

what had roufed the hopes, and given an energy unfelt before, to the barbarous hordes, that preffed forwards on every fide? It was the luft of plunder; but more than that, it was the enfeebled trunk of empire, become an object of their fcorn.

Similar effects muft ever refult from fimilar caufes. The dagger which could pierce a Roman breaft, would lay you or me in the duft. Modern kingdoms muft therefore fall, as others have done, if the fame feeds of deftruction are preparing their ruin. They are. With pain I look to England. Every fymptom, which the moft accurate hiftorians defcribed, as preceding the diffolution of Rome, I fee furrowed on her countenance.

In the higher orders of the State reigned a fpirit of extravagant profufion, to gratify cravings of which, when honourable means could not fuffice, they defcended to the bafeft. In fortune they became bankrupts and in fame. The religion of their country they ridiculed, and virtuous honefty was a term of reproach. They difcarded the habits of manhood, and he was the trueft Roman who could be foremoft in effeminacy, in revelry, and in impudence. Decency was prudery, the love of order was low vulgarity, and œconomy was avarice. The fame paffions were found at the head of armies and in the fenate; they difgraced the

ftatefman,

ſtateſman, and they rendered vile the diſtributors of public juſtice and the guardians of the laws.—— The miniſters of the gods and the philoſophers had received the common taint. The latter vainly emulous of ſuperior wiſdom, rejected, as idle prejudice, the common tenets of reaſon, and weakened the moral duties by ſpecious theories. The former, rendered no longer venerable by the ſacred character, which they had dared to pollute, mixed with the gay and the voluptuous, in the queſt of pleaſure and the emoluments of office. The people deſpiſed them. In return they became more haughty, and more exacting. Whom they could no longer cajole, they inſulted, and they drove them from the altars of the gods.—The virtues of domeſtic life, which had once been their faireſt ornament, in the houſhold cares and the occupations of retirement, now could not fill the attention of the Roman ladies. They loved to meet the admiring eye, to hear the voice of flattery, and to ſtand foremoſt in the theatres, and the public games. In this change of manners the genuine character of the ſex was no longer diſcernible; and it became a doubt, whether more than the mere appearance of female virtue was left in Rome.—The contagion had deſcended. In the lower ranks were prodigality, inſolence, and profaneneſs. There was want of honour, want of honeſty, want of ſubordination, want of reverence for the laws and for the

the gods. The ſoldier was debauched and enervated; the artiſan only laboured that he might diſſipate; and the peaſant, leaning on his ſpade, dared to ſneer at holy things, and to ridicule the ſimplicity of the maid whom his promiſes had ſeduced.

Such were the great features of vice and degeneracy, which had foully marked the Roman name, before the republic was enſlaved, and they did but ſpread, and grow more gigantic, till the empire was overwhelmed, and ſunk for ever. The application to England can be eaſily made; though in each particular it will not exactly tally. It is well. I fear, however, the difference only lies in this, that Rome fell, and we are falling. In her the poiſon had reached the heart: It is moving in our veins.

" 'Tis therefore, many whoſe ſequeſter'd lot
Forbids their interference, looking on,
Anticipate perforce ſome dire event;
And ſeeing the old caſtle of the State,
That promiſed once more firmneſs, ſo aſſail'd
That all its tempeſt-beaten turrets ſhake,
Stand motionleſs expectants of its fall. COWPER.

I ſhall be told that moraliſts, preachers, and poets, and calculators as wild and gloomy as they, have, from the beginning of time, held this melancholy lan-

language; but that the events never anſwered to their predictions.—Have not then thoſe kingdoms fallen, which I mentioned; and was not their fall foreſeen. Men, I own, are often ſanguine, and their imaginations anticipate events, the cauſes of which however are too palpable. In theſe views, there is by many a gloomy pleaſure found, on which the mind reſts, while every act of attention gives new colouring to the ſwelling ſcene. But when data are given, on which reaſon works, and the concluſions are deduced from analogy, then is the proceſs ſure, and the inference unhazarded. Moral cauſes, I before obſerved, work their effects, with infallible preciſion; but as their mode of operation is hidden from the ſight, and they ſeem to be checked, in their progreſs, by the capricious paſſions of mortals, which know no certain channel, it is thought they cannot be meaſured by any fixed canons of calculation. The man, however, who has been familiar with himſelf, and who has watched the workings of his own heart and head, will have diſcovered that the ebbs and flows there are more regular and determined, than he before ſuſpected. What is, in this reſpect, true, applies to the great ſyſtem of moral cauſes, on which the riſe and fall of nations are known to depend. If it be certain that, from laws wiſely planned, and cheerfully obeyed, will ariſe order in the people, and from order happineſs; ſo will anarchy produce con-

confuſion, and confuſion miſery. The genial warmth of the ſun does not more certainly promote, and the nipping froſts of March check the progreſs of vegetation.

Much is ſaid of the civil conſtitution of Britain, ſo juſtly poiſed, and ſo firmly knitted together, that it can counteract theſe inteſtine evils, and triumph over a combination of cauſes, which have ruined other ſtates. It is the majeſtic oak, which, nor the howling tempeſt, nor the canker at heart, ſhall move from the ſolid baſis on which it ſtands. —An old Latin adage ſays, *corruptio optimi peſſima*, that is, the more perfect the ſubject, the more dreadful is its ſtate, when the gangrene has vitiated the maſs. This equipoiſe in our conſtitution as it is productive of much good, ſo eventually may it be the occaſion of our ruin. The ſmalleſt additional weight, not duly diſtributed, deſtroys the equilibrium. When prerogative preponderates, the liberty of the people ſuffers; and when the balance inclines to the people, licentiouſneſs prevails, and the ſtate is threatened with diſſolution. While the views of miniſters are directed to the general weal, and the people are ſatisfied, no form of government can be better adapted to produce the greateſt good. In the oppoſition of parties, and the conflict of intereſts, civil commotions enſue, and the jealouſy of power, which each one feels, rouſes

rouſes him to precipitancy and to arms. In this ſtate of things, a bold leader diſſolves the conſtitution. When luxury has unnerved the arm, and ſecurity from foreign enemies has lulled the proud ſpirit of the nation, then may an ambitious monarch buy the voices of the indigent, ſeize the reins, and become the tyrant of his people. As this has been the fate of other free ſtates; ſo probably it will be ours. Before the ſtrong man falls, diſeaſe muſt have waſted his vigour, or the dagger pierced his veins.

But do not the exertions, we lately made, (exertions which, before the eyes of Europe, have placed England in a new point of elevation) evince that no ſources are exhauſted; that we are ſtill ſtrong in the vigour of manhood, and in the energy, at leaſt, of public virtue.—The exertions certainly were great, and the ſpirit which led them forward was manly. But when a nation becomes incapable of theſe efforts, it is already fallen. The ſymptoms I deſcribed, are the companions of its decline. Thanks alſo to the youth, who with an Herculean arm, conducts the vaſt machine of empire! He is a proof of my poſition, that the mind, unclouded by paſſion, and the body, unenfeebled by vicious indulgence, are tranſcendently adapted to the double purpoſe of deſign and execution. The night he has not ſpent in revellings, nor the day in ſauntering indolence. Unſolicited by the cravings of

of profuſion, he has not her calls to gratify. His intereſt is his country's intereſt, and to promote her glory is his firſt ambition.—*Serus in cælum redeas!*

To ſpeak of the probable event of the national debt comes not within the limits of this eſſay. It has afforded ample matter to the lucubrations of calculators and ſtate-empirics. The evil, however, in every view, is ſeriouſly alarming.

The wealth of England and its power have, ſurely, been promoted by its commerce with other nations, and by its manufactures at home: But they alſo have been the ſources of many evils; and our preſent depravity of manners takes its principal ſtrength from them.—With the products of other climes are imported their peculiar vices. Beſides, it is the effect of trade, tying down the mind to its own purſuits, to circumſcribe its faculties, to weaken its ſenſibilities, and to render it familiar with all the arts, by which wealth may be acquired and retained.—The towns where manufactures are eſtabliſhed, are ſeminaries of vice. The contagion reaches to the peaſant, and infects the villages. They may give us many ſoldiers; but do they give ſinews and the bone of men?

Before the love of gain had extended commerce, and luxury had quickened the loom and the anvil,

England

England was leſs rich; but had we fewer honeſt citizens, amd fewer patriots? Indeed, were we leſs populous? The country is drained of its inhabitants to ſupply the loſſes, which diſeaſe, contracted from a thouſand cauſes, never fails to make in the crouded cities. The country, after all, is the only nurſery, where ſtrong bodies and ſound minds are bred. Were our barren waſtes incloſed, and the plough permitted to break their uſeleſs ſod; we ſhould ſee the wondrous productions of Deucalion and Pyrra realized before our eyes. Men and women would ſpring up where rocks and barrenneſs had before dwelt. I would rather ſee agriculture extended, than cities built. The event even would compenſate for the loſs of empire. It would do more. The empire we have loſt would be re-produced at home; and were India ſevered from us as America has been, in our own fields we ſhould find all its boaſted riches.

In viewing the crimes of nations, which ſeem to forebode their fall, the moraliſt cannot ſtop at ſecondary cauſes. He knows there is a Providence above, which watches over, and conducts, the affairs of men. Even ſometimes does he ſeem to ſee the fingers writing upon the wall, and without the ſpirit of divination, he can interpret the awful ſcroll. If God, for their ſins, has viſited other nations in his wrath, will he for ever bear with ours?

In

In the great ſyſtem of the univerſe it matters little, whether kingdoms riſe or fall. As one bubble burſts, another forms. But to us whoſe views are circumſcribed, and who are actors on the ſcene, it is not quite ſo indifferent. The patriot then, as far as means are within his reach, will ſtrive to avert the evil hour; while the moraliſt, deploring the loſs of virtue in his fellow citizens, will, on his ſide, labour to apply a remedy to the diſeaſe. Though the decrees of heaven are irreverſible; yet are they, it is preſumed, ſometimes conditional, their completion depending on the interference of ſecondary cauſes. Among theſe the moral agent, man, ſtands foremoſt. Motives for deſpondency there are none, while time flows on, and every thing ſeems to call us into action. The torrent perhaps can yet be ſtemmed, which threatens our ruin. To do it with more effect, we muſt ſee where its ſource lies, and what are the cauſes which principally ſwell its current. The national depravity is great, and all ranks are infected. I will conſider the lower orders of ſociety.

If inſtruction be ſo neceſſary, that, without it, man is little ſuperior to the beaſt which tills his field, how forlorn will be their condition, who are utterly deprived of it! I ſpeak of that inſtruction which is adapted to ſtation, that which is barely calculated to open the mind to the impreſſions of

duty, and to ſhew what that duty is. God is our father, and we are his children. This is the firſt relation in which we ſtand. We are members of ſociety, and of this ſociety various are the orders. Hence proceeds the ſecond relation. On theſe two relations are grounded all the duties of religion and morality. In point of religion, we have all the ſame obligations; becauſe God is the common father of all. As members of ſociety, our ſituations in life are different; hence different are our duties. The magiſtrate has his duties; ſo has the common citizen, ſo has the parent, and ſo has the child. It is the deſign then of inſtruction to lay open theſe reſpective duties, and to preſs their compliance on the mind. However obvious they may ſeem, it is only by inſtruction they can be conveyed. Human nature is not ſelf-taught. And ſo indolently ſtupid is the untutored mind, that, without inſtigation, it will neither look for, nor will it find, what is ſo neceſſary to the common improvement of its character. Without this improvement, I have ſaid, what man is; but I have not ſaid all that, as ſociety is now conſtituted, he ſoon will be. Ignorant of his duties, they can have no call on him; but his paſſions, headſtrong and unoppoſed, will bear him into vice, and the example of others will complete his ruin. The puniſhments, with which the laws threaten the perpetrators of certain

certain crimes, will be a check to them; comparatively, however, theſe are but few.

That the inſtruction, I ſpeak of, has been long neglected, needs no proof. It is marked on the manners of the people. Generations have paſſed without it. Will, or can, the parent therefore, who has himſelf learned nothing, and whoſe habits are bad, inſtruct his offſpring, and tutour them to virtue? The ſon will walk in his father's ways.—— Here lies the ſource of the evil.

Friends to human nature and to virtue, ſeeing the general ſpread of viciouſneſs, and deploring it, have, with becoming fortitude, addreſſed the public, and implored aid againſt the enemy. They have offered ſchemes of reformation, in *police bills*, *penitentiary bills*, *poor bills*, and *priſon bills*. Had their patriotic views been ſeconded, in the fulleſt extent, the root of the evil remained vigorous and untouched. They only aimed at the branches of the diſorder.—So to regulate the internal œconomy of the great cities, that the perſons and property of the inhabitants ſhould be protected from depredation and inſult, and that indecency ſhould not openly walk the ſtreets, was an object of great moment. It has not, however, been effected.—— It was important to build houſes, wherein they who had merited public chaſtiſement, ſhould be con-

fined to hard labour. This is in execution.—The number of poor being exorbitant, and the conſequent burthens on the people intolerable, it became neceſſary to oppoſe the growing grievance. Poor bills have been multiplied, and a ſcheme of great complication is now before the public.——The regulation alſo of priſons, it muſt be owned, call for ſerious attention. The benevolent man, who, with an ardour unheared of before in the annals of human nature, has proſecuted the deſign, experiences, at this moment, the proudeſt favour which a nation can confer.

A royal *Proclamation* alſo has been iſſued, to enforce the execution of the laws, and to rouſe the magiſtrates to their duty. The benevolence of His Majeſty, and his love of virtue are announced in the meaſure, while it proclaims the extent and enormity of the evil. It may give ſome temporary or local relief. Its inſufficiency has been often experienced.

Theſe ſchemes, I ſaid, do not reach the root of the diſorder. It is my duty to prove it.——Could a plan be deviſed that ſhould, at once, take off all the full-blown crimes which infeſt ſociety, but very little of the general evil would be removed. The maſs would remain vitiated in the riſing generation, and, like the Hydra, would ſoon puſh out heads,

monſtrous

monſtrous and devouring as the firſt. What are the crimes which are aimed to be ſuppreſſed? Only ſuch as are moſt flagrant. To ſpeak more properly, the deſign is not ſo much to hinder the commiſſion of crimes, as to puniſh them, in the moſt effectual manner, when committed. It is alſo propoſed to reform the lives of theſe profligates, and to take care that they do not return on the community more vicious than when they entered their priſon-houſe. To reform ſuch characters is, I believe, impoſſible. Fear and hard labour may induce them to counterfeit; but they cannot give virtuous propenſities, or virtuous habits. Nor will inſtruction be then able to effect it.

Were the depravity of the nation ſo partial as theſe gentlemen ſeem to ſuppoſe, it might doubtleſs be eradicated by their endeavours. It would be principally confined to thoſe whom public juſtice can attach. But ſo, aſſuredly, it is not; nor does it lie ſo near to the ſurface. It is ſtill the wiſh of every honeſt man, that ſucceſs may attend all attempts to diſperſe the evil. Every mode of attack is praiſe-worthy, and may do ſomething. Only let not too ſanguine hopes be formed, or too great reliance be made on means, which, at beſt, can but retrench the more luxuriant ſhoots, or apply palliatives, while the diſeaſe rankling at the core, remains unaffected.

This was ſeen by a patriotic and virtuous citizen, to whom, it is my hope, the preſent generation will raiſe a monument of gratitude. Already he poſſeſſes one (and that, I think, will pleaſe him beſt) in the breaſts of his fellow-ſubjects. I ſpeak of Mr. RAIKES, of *Gloceſter*, who firſt propoſed and realized the ſcheme of SUNDAY SCHOOLS. May I be indulged the romantic thought, that, ſhould the memorial, I mentioned, be dedicated to his name, our children's children ſhall be taught to repeat his praiſes, and a feſtival ſhall be appointed in honour of the benevolent man! As the day annually returns, the aged parents, who reaped the bleſſings of his plan, ſhall lead their infants to the holy ſpot; with garlands they ſhall deck his monument; and in chorus they ſhall be heard to ſing, "*He was our benefactor and his country's friend.*"

The inſtitution of theſe ſchools I view with pleaſure, and the happieſt effects may be augured from them. They will give the inſtruction which I ſaid was ſo neceſſary; will open the mind to religion and to virtue; will ſpread the principles of charity, of forbearance, and of mildneſs; will inſpire the love of order, and of reſpect for the laws; in a word, they will dry up the ſources of the torrent which ſeemed ready to overwhelm the nation. The expectation is not too ſanguine. For if children be taken early to the ſchools, where it cannot

cannot be but good impreſſions muſt be made, they will grow up with the happy bias. The ſubordination in which their exerciſes muſt be performed, will habituate them to diſcipline. The Sunday they will learn to keep holy. If their parents, fortunately, ſhould be induced to co-operate, then may themſelves be in part reformed, and in their houſes, during the week, will be ſtrengthened, by good example and advice, the ſcheme of inſtruction which began in the ſchools. Perverſe and obſtinate, ſhould they continue to neglect their children, ſtill ſomething will have been learned, which may ſerve to reſiſt the influence of bad example. In our days ſhould the good be but partial, we know that the next generation will experience more happy effects, in a ſucceſſion of parents, on whoſe minds had been ſown the ſeeds of early virtue. This alone will more than compenſate every exertion.

Already theſe ſchools are become very general, and great good has been experienced from them. This is a full anſwer to all objections. It has been objected, that learning in the lower ranks of life is ſeldom of any uſe, and is ſometimes hurtful.—— Is religious inſtruction then of no avail? Or can inſtruction be effectually conveyed, where the ordinary talent of being able to read, has not been firſt

firſt acquired? More than this is not neceſſary.—It has been objected, that all ſocieties of Chriſtians are careful to inſtil into their children the elements at leaſt of religion, and that it is the duty of their reſpective miniſters to attend to it. This being done, Sunday ſchools are unneceſſary.——The exiſtence of the evil we complain of ſhews too evidently, with what incaution the objection has been made. Blame I mean not to caſt on any order of men, becauſe it is my wiſh to conciliate, and not to irritate the minds of any. The evil exiſts; let us unite to repreſs it, for the cauſe is common.

When ſchemes are propoſed, which ſeem to promiſe much advantage, they are often eagerly adopted; but in this eagerneſs we do not always conſider what is the beſt method to enſure their ſucceſs. Have the beſt methods been adopted in the preſent caſe? The ſubject merits attention.

Beſides the leading object, which is to teach the firſt and moſt eſſential duties, there are other things combined with it, which ſhould never be loſt ſight of. The promoters of the ſcheme had, I doubt not, this alſo in view. Indeed, ſo cloſely connected are all the parts of the moral ſyſtem, that they neceſſarily introduce one another.

From

From the liberty which the Reformation introduced into the Chriſtian ſcheme, and which, in this country, our political habits have much contributed to ſtrengthen, has proceeded that almoſt infinite variety which appears in religious opinions. Government, indeed, has judged it expedient to give its ſanction only to one form of worſhip, and laws have been made for its ſtability.. This however can deprive no one of the right inherent in his conſcience, of thinking for himſelf. How juſt ſoever in itſelf, and congenial with the ſpirit of Proteſtantiſm, this liberty of choice may be, it has proved the occaſion of great animoſity. Parties have ſprung up in religion, as acrimonious and as intolerant as were ever known in politics and in civil ſtriſe. The ſpirit is ſurely contrary to the firſt principles of the religion, in which we all profeſs to believe, and its conſequences have been ſeverely felt. Religious animoſity is of all affections the worſt, for it ſeems to take the faſteſt hold of the mind, and to mix in the moſt diſtant concerns. In this country it has, more than once, been the cauſe of the greateſt political evils. The monſter dies away: let it be our endeavour to complete his fall.

I think the Sunday ſchools may be made to anſwer to this great deſign. Why then ſhould it not be done? Hitherto it has not, and only partial

good

good has been obtained.——Where the members of the Church have eſtabliſhed them, either the children of Diſſenters have been excluded, or the rules of the inſtitution ſerved as an excluſion. They are compelled to attend the ſervice, and to learn the catechiſm of the Church. This ſurely is unreaſonable. The Diſſenters, on their ſide, have not always been more liberal. The tendency of ſuch arrangements is evident. Not only does it keep alive an oppoſition ſpirit among the leaders, but it alſo gives birth to it in the unſuſpecting minds of the children. Party names are given, and prejudices are formed. Thus is animoſity carried into the very ſcheme, which benevolence projected, and which has charity and the love of virtue for its ſupport. So true is it, that the beſt-intentioned minds are then even, perhaps, the moſt open to ſiniſter impreſſions, when religion, with its attendant ſenſibilities, ſeems to draw their purſes and to direct their hands. And what is there, after all, in any man's particular tenets, able ſo to narrow the mind, that then only he ſhould be low and circumſcribed, when every rational motive ſeems to call for liberality and expanſion of heart? Study human nature we may, but there ever will remain ſomething inexplicable in its character. Could I preſume, indeed, that ſome *intereſt*, viſible or latent, acted on every occaſion, an under-part, at leaſt,

leaſt, the problem would be ſolved. I am unwilling to ſuppoſe it, yet a cauſe there muſt be.

Let me then propoſe, that ſchools be opened on a more extended plan; and that, in this buſineſs, we for once forget that we are Church of Englandmen, Preſbyterians, Baptiſts, Roman Catholics, or Quakers. This is to aſk much, I know; but let the experiment be tried. Uſe will form us to it.

The plan I mean is this.——*Where ſchools are eſtabliſhed, let children of all religions be invited to enter.* But then it will be neceſſary that elementary books of inſtruction be prepared, which ſhall contain nothing contrary to the peculiar tenets of any Chriſtian ſociety. It muſt be further agreed, that the children attend their reſpective places of worſhip, agreeable to the mode of faith in which they are bred. Such being the regulations, the maſters will be inſtructed religiouſly to obſerve them, and the viſitors, on honour, will comply with the ſame.

Where are the objections to ſuch a ſcheme as this? The compiling of the books, or catechiſms, will be an eaſy taſk. They muſt be elementary, but practical and comprehenſive. When we have ſeparated from each ſociety its diſtinctive opinions, which are moſtly ſpeculative, will be left a great maſs of Chriſtian doctrine, and the whole ſyſtem of moral

moral duties. Of theſe we will form our new religious code; to which no one ſhall object, becauſe he before profeſſed it all, with the addition only of certain tenets.——The exiſtence of God and his attributes, his providential care over us and over the world which he made; the rewards of virtue and the puniſhments of vice.—The divine miſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, his life, his preaching, his death and reſurrection, and his future coming to judge the world.—The ten commandments, and all the duties of life. The obſervation of the ſabbath, with morning and evening prayer.—The ſcriptures, what, and by whom written: ſelect paſſages from the old and new.——Obedience to the laws, and the puniſhments they inflict on certain crimes. ——Here, ſurely, are materials, ample and important enough.

I ſaid, the books ſhould be *elementary*, that is, eaſy and familiar, adapted to the capacities of children. They ſhall begin with what is moſt practical and intelligible, gradually opening to greater points as the underſtanding expands, and as progreſs is made. But I would diſſuade from any thing that is technical or ſyſtematic, however plauſible; for ſuch methods, out of theory, have ſeldom been found to anſwer. The viſible progreſs which children make is very ſlow. They ſeem to receive little more than words; however, notions will

will gradually be aſſociated with them. From often hearing of God, of duty, and of a future ſtate, impreſſions will be mechanically made, and they will operate in due time. They will create a reverence for religion, and for its general dictates; and a foundation for the principle of conſcience will be laid, that will always act as a check upon vice and immorality.

So far we have ſeen nothing either objectionable or impracticable. Let me now ſuppoſe a child, Catholic or Proteſtant, on whoſe mind have been made all the impreſſions of this plan, in its fulleſt extent. Will any principles or opinions be found there, which will not moſt aptly coaleſce with any future ſtructure of peculiar tenets, which it may pleaſe his parents or miniſters to ſuperinduce? Evidently not. But he will have learned every fundamental maxim of truth and virtue, which the moſt zealous and enlightened teacher could have been ambitious to inſtil. Nor does the plan exclude a concomitance, or even a priority, of inſtruction, if it ſhould be the wiſh of any one to make his child a Proteſtant, for inſtance, before he has learned the principles of a Chriſtian and a man. This ſhall be optional. Though my advice would be, that he ſhould be neither ſo partial or ſo precipitate.

Now

Now let me ſee, whether we have not gained, with theſe treaſures of moral inſtruction, the other grand point I mentioned, that is, in the minds which this plan has tutored, a privation of all religious animoſity, and a fund of general benevolence and liberality? I am ſure we have. Our elementary books have ever inculcated theſe virtues; they have never alluded to party-names, or diſcriminating opinions; but they have invariably ſaid, that all mankind were brothers, and that it was their firſt duty to love one another. They ſpoke of diſſentions, of quarrels, and of rancour as inimical to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and as debaſing to the heart of man. Their inſtructors, by word and conduct, were careful to ſtrengthen the ſame impreſſions: while the ſight of the viſitors, men of different religious perſuaſions, but all co-operating in the ſame plan, would moſt effectually promote the important work. The laſt circumſtance, in every point of view, is intereſting. Here I only wiſh to mention, that as children are always much moved by the conduct of their ſuperiors, the effect on their minds muſt be pleaſing, when they begin to reflect, that they who from pure benevolence became their benefactors, were men of different perſuſions.

Such is the plan I wiſh to ſee executed, and ſuch muſt be its effects. It has every advantage which others

others poſſeſs; and it beſides has many which they cannot pretend to. Why then ſhould it not be attempted? If the man the moſt bigotted to his own tenets can ſay, it will obſtruct their influence, or their ſpread, I am willing to reſign it. I wiſh, however, to be underſtood, that by tenets I do not mean party prejudice, or a diſlike of thoſe who in opinion chuſe to differ from us; for ſuch diſpoſitions, I do think, this ſcheme is calculated utterly to extirpate.

Some there ſtill may be, whom an early predilection for their own books of inſtruction has ſo faſcinated, that they will not eaſily be prevailed on to reſign them, even in the partial manner I requeſt. Have they ever maturely weighed their contents, and compared the methods they purſue, with the character and extent of the infant mind? I have before me ſome of the moſt popular catechiſms.—That of the *Church* is conciſe and perſpicuous enough to the inſtructed mind; but it has few words, and as few ideas, adapted to the underſtandings of children. It opens with the *Chriſtian covenant* entered into by baptiſm, deſcribing its myſtical effects, and its ſolemn engagements. The child repeats, that he has been made a *member of Chriſt, a child of God*, and an *inheritor of the kingdom of heaven*; that he muſt *renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all*

all the ſinful luſts of the fleſh; and he declares that *he verily thinks he is bound to believe and to do as his Godfathers and Godmothers promiſed for him.*—There is not here a ſingle notion adequate to his apprehenſion.

The ſecond part, on the *Chriſtian faith*, propoſes the Creed, which the child rehearſes as containing the articles of his belief; he ſays what are the chief of theſe, declaring his belief in the myſterious doctrine of the *Trinity*; in God the Father, who made the world; in God the Son, who redeemed it; and in God the Holy Ghoſt, who *ſanctifieth him, and all the elect people of God.*——If it be expedient ſo ſoon to propoſe theſe ſublime doctines, it muſt be owing to their great importance in the Chriſtian ſcheme. Yet I think, were the mind prepared for them, their impreſſion would be more diſtinct and awful. Had I a ſecret to communicate to a child, on which much depended, I would do it with ſolemnity, and when ſome maturity of years inſured its effect.

The third part treats on the *Chriſtian obedience*, in the ten commandments, which the child repeats, adding the two chief things to be learned from them, his duty towards God, and his duty towards his neighbour, and theſe duties he exemplifies in two anſwers, which are clear and comprehenſive.—

The

The whole article is admirably drawn. I can only regret that, inſtead of the third, it does not poſſeſs the firſt place. The obvious order in inſtruction is, to proceed from what is moſt evident to what is leſs ſo. Here, on the contrary, the proceſs is from things myſterious and incomprehenſible to things practical and of eaſy evidence.

The fourth part is on the *Chriſtian prayer.*—— This ſucceſſion is natural, and connects very well with the preceding article.

The laſt part treats of the *Chriſtian ſacraments.*— The technical terms and the metaphyſical ideas of this article entitle it, undoubtedly, to the place it occupies. No part of it is within the reach of children; but it muſt be ſuppoſed, that they have, by this time, gone through inſtruction, which has prepared them for it.

My objection then to the Church catechiſm is, that its arrangement is prepoſterous, that its language is too abſtruſe and ſcholaſtic, and that it is not ſufficiently broken by familiar queſtions. To this it may alſo be ſeriouſly added, that it no where diſtinctly mentions a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, only in the brief words of the Creed.

That of the Diſſenters, entitled the *Aſſembly's Catechiſm*, even as abridged for beginners, contains

all the faults, and not all the perfections, of the former. In the very ſecond page, having ſtated the doctrine of the *Trinity*, it proceeds to the *decrees of God*, which the child defines to be *his eternal purpoſe, according to the council of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatſoever ſhall come to paſs*. Similar abſtruſe matter is every where introduced; nor do I hardly find a queſtion, excepting perhaps on the practical duties of the Ten Commandments, which can, with the ſmalleſt propriety, be offered to a child.

I ſhall only further notice the Catechiſm of the *Roman Catholics*; in the firſt page of which the child remarks, that *his ſoul is like to God, becauſe it is a ſpirit endowed with underſtanding and free-will, and is immortal; and that as in God there is one God and three perſons, ſo in man there is one ſoul and three powers, which are will, memory, and underſtanding*.——This may ſuffice to ſhew how ill conſtructed it is; beſides, the ſame bad arrangement and confuſion of ideas, in ſpeculative and in practical, in myſtery and in moral truths, pervade the whole. A mind thus tutored, can ſee nothing diſtinctly: the whole ſyſtem of ideas muſt be confuſed, anſwering to the catechiſtical proceſs whereby they were introduced. It will be well, if inſtability in belief be not the conſequence of a method ſo incoherent and undefined.

Were

Were theſe, and other catechiſms, reformed agreeably to the plan I ſuggeſted for the ſchools, it would, in my opinion, be a valuable amendment. The mind would be firſt provided with what is fundamental, and adapted to its capacities, and its ſtores of improvement would gradually ſwell, as nature opened and inſtruction ſerved. I would alſo recommend, that in delivering the particular tenets of ſocieties, with accuracy and fullneſs, no reflections, particularly of an acrimonious or malevolent tendency, be introduced on the opinions of others. Let each cauſe ſtand on its own baſis. Am I a better man, or is my faith more ſecure, becauſe my brother errs? Beſides, from ſuch illiberal reflections (with which moſt books, hitherto put into the hands of children, abound) have certainly ariſen all the evils of religious animoſity, under which, even in a civil light, this country has ſo long and ſo often ſuffered. I well know, there is nothing in the principles of any ſociety which can moſt diſtantly tend to make them bad men, or bad citizens. This being ſo, why may they not, unmoleſted, profeſs their peculiar modes of belief, with the ſame liberty as you or I?

It may perhaps be apprehended, that the ſcheme I have propoſed, will generate in young people an *indifference* to particular modes of faith. It may

give them, it will be ſaid, ſound principles of morality; but will it give them *orthodoxy?*—*This* muſt depend on the zeal of their reſpective miniſters; and as to *indifference*, it may eaſily be removed by the ſame agent. By the rules of the inſtitution, the children will be required to aſſiſt at their own places of worſhip: and will their minds, think you, be leſs prepared for inſtruction, than when before they were utterly neglected? If indeed no care be taken to ſuperadd thoſe tenets, which they who make the objection deem ſo eſſential, I do not pretend to ſay, that we ſhall imprint any warmth of attachment to them. To attempt it would be to ſubvert a leading principle in the plan. Theirs will be the blame who have an eaſy remedy at hand. But ſhould the worſt caſe ſometimes happen; which muſt be thought preferable, morality without orthodoxy, or orthodoxy without morality? They will be careful to unite them, who ſincerely think the union of any value.

The importance of the ſubject has detained me longer than I expected, though it is the point I had prinpcially in view. And I will cloſe it with the ſanguine expectation, that the great effect of reforming the manners of the people will be, more or leſs, produced, on whatever plan the Sunday ſchools are conducted, provided it be with zeal and per-

perſeverance. May not government then (for the exiſtence of the ſtate, as a great and honourable nation, is at ſtake) give them a powerful ſupport? May not the mitred heads of the church, and their dignified clergy, co-operate with their wealth, their learning, and their influence; for they, ſurely, are much intereſted in the ſuppreſſion of vice and the promotion of virtue? And may not all the heads of the diſſenting congregations, rich in zeal and ſacred wiſdom, bring their forces alſo in aid of the general cauſe?

Engaged as I am on the ſubject, I cannot leave it while an idea remains with me, which poſſibly, in the event of things, may benefit the nation which I love. Yet has the whole matter, I know, been often reviewed before, and preſented in all forms, to the public. In the concerns of men are propitious and unpropitious moments. How to ſeize the firſt is important, as on it depends the ſucceſs of the wiſeſt undertakings. The waves of diſtant commotion, which the rumours of war excite, ſeem ſubſiding to a calm. At home, the the violence of party is ſtilled, and we are diſpoſed to union. Theſe are the auſpicious moments when attention may be given to the internal œconomy; when ſchemes of reformation may be diſcuſſed, and new arrangements made, where neceſſary.

We have traced the corruption in the manners of the people to its ſource, and we have found, I truſt, an efficacious remedy to the evil. The depravity in the higher, and in the higheſt, ranks in life, ſprings undoubtedly from a ſimilar cauſe. I am not diſpoſed to ſurvey the times through the medium of ſplenetic obſervation. But he muſt be blind indeed who cannot ſee the falling off; and he little leſs ſo, who is ignorant of the cauſe. It lies in the want of diſcipline and religious inſtruction in our ſchools and colleges. The regulations, which our anceſtors made for theſe eſtabliſhments, were wiſely planned. In this innovating and affected age, they are as unwiſely neglected. It is time the public ſhould be no longer duped and inſulted. Surely they have a claim to ſee thoſe places well adminiſtered, which the piety and beneficence of their anceſtors contributed to found.

I know the excuſe is, that the age will not bear reſtraint, and that the manners of the world out of doors are ſuch, that no diſcipline can preſerve the youth from their contagion. That parents even help on the evil, by extravagant allowances of money, and by the bad example they ſhew them, during the receſſes, at home.—Had mankind, at all times, been diſpoſed to liſten to what indolence and culpable remiſſneſs might urge in their defence, the world indeed had, at this moment, been worſe conſtituted

ſtituted than it is. *The ſerpent beguiled me, and I did eat*, ſaid the firſt woman; but her apology was not admitted. I can feel the force of the defence which is made, and I am willing, in ſome inſtances, to allow its validity. Univerſally it cannot apply, where means are uſed to counteract the bad influence which is complained of. In proportion as this preſſes, and penetrates into the ſchools and univerſities, vigour ſhould be uſed to oppoſe it. There are officers, whoſe hands are inveſted with every neceſſary power. Let this be exerted, and the reins of diſcipline drawn tight. No evil exiſts that perſeverent labour will not ſurmount. Were our officers, military and naval, permitted to urge the depravity of the age, as a ſufficient apology for permitting diſcipline to relax in their ſeveral departments, where, at this time, would be the ſtrength and dignity of Britain? Diſcipline and ſubordination they only aim at, and they have it. Would not ſimilar means ſucceed in our colleges?

" I have myſelf, ſays Mr. Knox, *(Liberal Educ.* " p. 344.) reſided long in one of the univerſities, " (and the ſiſters are much alike) and I have ſeen " in it many evils.——I ſaw immorality, *habitual* " drunkenneſs, idleneſs, ignorance, and vanity, " *openly* and *boaſtingly* obtruding themſelves on " *public* view. I ſaw them triumphing *without con-* " *troul* over the timidity of modeſt merit."—And ſhall

ſhall there be no hand willing or ſtrong enough to oppoſe this monſtrous evil? If they, whoſe duty it is, will not attempt it, the legiſlative arm muſt be implored to interfere. It is too well known what are, in ſome, the ſordid motives and intereſted views which check the execution of duty; while in vain do many honeſt and virtuous characters deplore an evil which unavailingly they ſtrive to oppoſe.

What can be expected, when young men, thus vitiated, come out upon the public? I pretend not to ſay, that their literary acquirements will be none, becauſe in ſome, at leaſt, this object will have been ſeriouſly attended to. I ſpeak of the moral character; of that mental form, which a becoming ſenſe of honour animates, and the love of truth ennobles. The ſeeds of theſe qualities were not ſown, and it would be folly to look for the fruit. Yet theſe are the men by whom all the higher departments in life, and in the ſtate, will be occupied, and the ſame muſt figure through the leſs conſpicuous lines of ſociety. The nation is then heared to complain, that places of the higheſt truſt are occupied by gameſters, libertines, and ſpendthrifts; that the naval and military departments are full of fine gentlemen, of debauchees, of men of levity in appearance, in converſation, and in principle; that in the ſenate, they are re-

preſented

preſented by men, whoſe youth, or want of talents, or privation of common honour and honeſty, render unfit to be truſted with the concerns of a great and extended empire. When Cyneas, ſay they, went out from the Roman ſenate, he reported, that he had ſeen a congreſs of kings. Such was their comportment and air of dignity.

There is, ſurely, a *national character* in every people, and ours has been ſometimes ſaid to reſemble that of Rome. Alas, *we have been!* Affected levity has taken place of our grave and thoughtful air; and to ſtern and independent virtue have ſucceeded Aſiatic manners.

> How, in the name of ſoldierſhip and ſenſe,
> Should England proſper, when ſuch things, as ſmooth
> And tender as a girl, all eſſenced o'er
> With odours, and as profligate as ſweet,
> Who ſell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,
> And love when they ſhould fight; when ſuch as theſe
> Preſume to lay their hands upon the ark
> Of her magnificent and awful cauſe.
>
> COWPER.

Such affectation is ridiculous, and like every other, ſits very aukwardly on the wearer. It is imported from abroad; for not ſatisfied with the depravity our young men can contract at home, we ſend them into other countries, there to cull the follies and vices which may pleaſe them beſt.

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Were the mind properly prepared, that is, mature in judgment and acquired knowledge, travelling would open to it ſources of information, and furniſh opportunities of reflection, which cannot be obtained by him who never leaves his native land. But to expect that boys ſhould make obſervations on men and manners, ſhould weigh and compare the laws, inſtitutions, cuſtoms, and characteriſtics of various people, is to expect an impoſſibility. Yet if this be not done, wherein lies the advantage? It is no leſs abſurd to ſuppoſe, that boys will not be ſtruck and captivated with vanity and trifles. What ſtrikes and captivates will infallibly adhere to the mind.

Serious and thinking parents, who ſee the inevitable ruin which threatens the morals and conſtitution of their children in the public ſchools, have recourſe to other modes of education. They give them to the care of private tutors, a plan which a thouſand diſadvantages attend; or they even ſend them abroad, hoping that, with ſome attention, they may acquire learning with leſs alloy of depravity. The contraction of foreign manners and foreign habits of mind is perhaps the leaſt evil, to which this method gives riſe. An Italian or French ſchool cannot be the ſeminary for an Engliſhman. It is the faſhion, I know, to ridicule this idea, as unbecoming that being, which has now

diſcovered

diſcovered that he is a citizen of the world. For my part, I reſpect the local attachment which a man feels for his country, though it is ſtiled a prejudice. It takes its riſe in nature, and is attended with effects greatly beneficial. Were this prejudice in favour of our country removed, are we ſure it would not be ſucceeded by others, leſs reaſonable and leſs innocent? Are we even certain, that prejudices againſt it might not find admiſſion?

To whatever ſide then we turn our eyes, either at home or abroad, nothing can be diſcovered in the preſent ſyſtem of education, but what calls for reformation. By no other means can the evil be removed.

The general ſtatutes and regulations of the colleges and ſchools I believe to be excellent. It is only neceſſary, therefore, to give them life and vigour. Diſcipline, in a moment, will revive, and with it all the advantages of ſubordination, order, and œconomy. An agent only is wanting to give motion to the engine. Let the powers be uſed with which the regular governors are inveſted. They ſeem ſufficient for every purpoſe. Zeal only and ſerious exertions have not hitherto been found. I think they muſt now be rouſed, when the unanimous voice of the nation demands it. Unfortunately,

tunately, after reiterated attempts, ſhould it be diſcovered, that the evil is too deeply rooted to be removed by common means, others muſt be recurred to. To our legiſlators the conſtitution has giveu a power which nothing can controul. In affairs of magnitude, then, we know what to look to. Never could it be exerted to a more valuable or important purpoſe. I ſhould hear with pleaſure that a bill were brought into the Houſe, " for the " better regulation of public ſchools and colleges, " by giving vigour to the ancient ſtatutes, or by " enacting new ones, if judged expedient." The mover of ſuch a bill would be a patriot indeed.

There is not, after all, in the affairs of men, a more forlorn or arduous undertaking than that of reformation. It has every obſtacle to combat which intereſt, and paſſion, and prejudice can lay before it. A plan, new from the foundation and in all its parts, is more eaſily executed. This, on trial, has generally been verified; when after repeated attempts, and much time loſt, no progreſs has been made; but vexation and diſappointment have accompanied every ſtep. Then is recourſe had to meaſures entirely new. It had better have been done at firſt.

Our Miniſter, whoſe mind is ardent and whoſe views are comprehenſive, will not, we know, ſhrink from

from labour. To him I would propoſe the ſcheme of digeſting a *New plan of national Education*, adapted to the different orders in ſociety. All the learning and wiſdom of the State would be ready to co-operate. The meaſure has already been attempted in ſome countries, and it is propoſed, I believe, in all; for the evil which called for it is general. Objections have been made, light and trivial, ſuch as men, habituated to old forms, and prejudiced from want of ſight, are uſed to make. Nor are the difficulties which would attend the meaſure ſo great as might be apprehended. Much light has been thrown on the ſubject, by the ableſt writers in this and other countries. This has ſmoothed the path, and excited beſides a very general attention. What is ardently deſired, is eaſy in execution; though when the welfare of a nation is at ſtake, eaſe or difficulty make no impreſſion on the patriot's eye.

The Diſſenters have juſt opened two academies, on liberal and extenſive plans; and as the general diſcipline of that ſociety is well known, the happieſt effects may be expected from the inſtitution.—But no where have my eyes been ſo pleaſed, and my mind ſo charmed, as with the Quakers' eſtabliſhment in the North. Mildneſs there tempers the ſeverity of diſcipline, and virtue becomes more amiable by the ſimplicity of its form; while the mind, in the mean time, is tutored to the ſterner habits of induſtrious

duſtrious labour. The legiſlator of Sparta would have viewed the inſtitution with admiration and pleaſure. It is only in a ſociety, ſo organized as that of the Quakers, that regulations can be formed which ſhall exhibit ſuch order, ſuch decency, ſuch decorum. But what we cannot rival we may imitate. The inſtitution is purely for the lower claſs.

I have little more to offer on theſe very important ſubjects; but it is the promotion of Sunday ſchools which I have principally in view. The zeal which firſt appeared in the buſineſs, begins, I fear, to cool; either becauſe the progreſs, which ſome expected, is not made, or from other obvious motives. I muſt repeat, that it is to the next generation we muſt look for great and viſible effects: there moſt certainly they will be found. But our own times will not be without their effects either. The meaſure of theſe we have it in our own power to determine. Were the plan I ſuggeſted very generally adopted, ſome of the evils, which have hitherto been experienced, would, I think, vaniſh. It would facilitate the progreſs of inſtruction to the children; while perhaps it might inſpire in the breaſts of the teachers and viſitors a ſpirit of laudable emulation, which would animate their zeal, and give it perſeverance. Never, I am ſure, were offered to any nation motives more cogent, than what every honeſt man muſt now feel, to ſupport

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an inſtitution, on which depends all that is valuable and dear in life.

It may be thought by ſome, that I have aſcribed too much efficacy to *moral cauſes*. View then thoſe ſocieties, where attention is given to the inſtruction of the poorer claſs; and then ſurvey the melancholy proſpect which other churches exhibit. As ſurely do good manners and induſtry accompany the firſt, as depravity, idleneſs, and improvidence are viſible in the latter. The effect is not aſcribable to any peculiar tenets, which may be more favourable to the growth of virtue. What good huſbandry produces in the fields of the induſtrious farmer, preciſely the ſame does education effect in the moral world. The Author of all Things would have ill-provided for the eſtabliſhment of truth and virtue, had he not pre-ordained a fixed ſyſtem of laws, which muſt univerſally prevail. On the certain agency of theſe is founded every theory of education.

Though I have mentioned the general depravity of all orders in the State, it will not, I hope, be thought that my eye is ſo organized, as to be incapable of ſeeing what is good and virtuous in many individuals. Never, I doubt not, have the moral and chriſtian virtues been carried to a higher perfection than this age and country can now exhibit.

And

And are not theſe, peradventure, the *ten righteous* men, for whoſe ſake Sodom and Gomorrah ſhall not be deſtroyed?

I will draw my ideas to a more ſimple point. Poſſibly the effect may be better felt.——Viewing the decline and fall of States, I aſcribed the event, with all other writers, to the want of virtue in the people. To account for this, I delineated the phyſical effect of vicious indulgence on the individual;—and if here it be ſo fatal, ſaid I, cannot the ſame reaſoning be applied to a ſociety, of which the major part is depraved? It can evidently. I then conſidered the nature of the ſelfiſh principle, and the operation of laws, as ſuppoſed capable to check the ſpread of vice. But in ſpite of theſe and all other means, nations I ſaw had fallen; therefore were they inſufficient. I took a brief ſurvey of Rome and of its manners, before the Republic was enſlaved, and I left the application to my reader. I mentioned the certain agency of moral cauſes, which, nor the boaſted excellence of our political conſtitution, nor any temporary exertions, however vigorous, could invalidate. I glanced at the effects of trade and manufactures, expreſſing a wiſh rather to ſee agriculture extended, than cities built. The country, ſaid I, is the nurſery where ſtrong bodies and ſound minds are bred. As a believer in divine Providence, I ſtated the awful viſitations

viſitations of heaven; yet I hoped it was ſtill in our power to avert the fatal day. At this the true patriot would labour: he would firſt look for the ſource of the evil (which he finds in the depraved manners of the people), then he would apply the moſt efficacious remedy.

I deſcribed the nature and utility of religious inſtruction, which having been ſadly neglected, has principally cauſed the diſorder. Various means to effect a reformation, inadequate and inſufficient, have been projected; theſe I enumerated. The inſtitution of Sunday ſchools ſeemed alone calculated to reach the root of the evil. I deſcribed their obvious effects. Every plan ſhould be made as productive as poſſible. Had this been done? It ſeemed not: I therefore propoſed a ſcheme for extending the benefits of Sunday ſchools, and anſwered the objections which might be urged againſt it. I endeavoured to ſhew that our moſt popular catechiſms are, in their preſent form, very ill adapted to the capacities of children, that they ſhould be amended, and in what manner.

In a curſory view I then ſurveyed the ſtate of education in our public ſchools and colleges; with Mr. Knox I deplored their fallen ſtate: and I joined the public voice to entreat a ſpeedy reſtoration of diſcipline and an effectual reformation.

Theſe means alone can reſtore virtue to the individual, and on it build the proſperity and firmneſs of the State; they can embelliſh private life, and exalt the public character; to religion they can give its former energy; and to the principles, which ennoble human nature, all their powers of operation; the national character they can re-eſtabliſh, and once more lift up the Engliſh name: in a word, theſe means alone can retard our decline, and ſave a falling nation.

THE END.

BIBL CANT ACAD